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(54) **HEATER FAN, ESPECIALLY FOR USE AS A NECK WARMER IN VEHICLE SEATS**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
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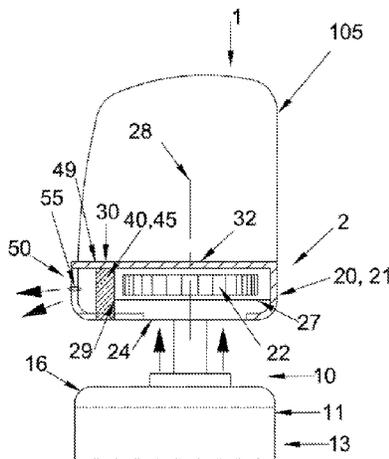
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention concerns a heater fan for a body support arrangement, and specifically the heater fan has at least one air delivery arrangement and at least one heating appliance.

18 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



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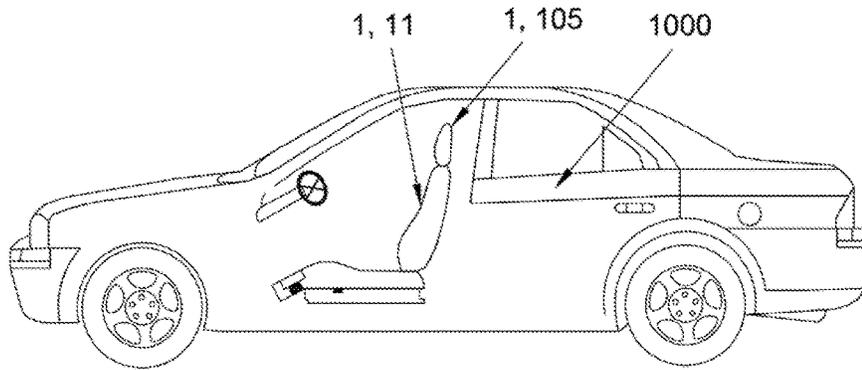


Fig. 1

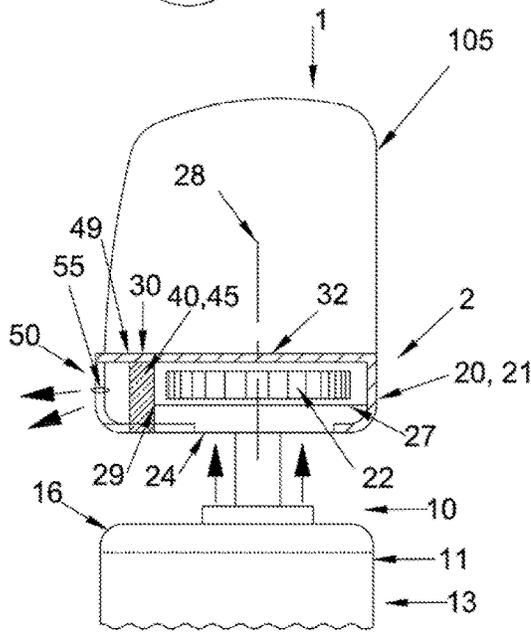


Fig. 2

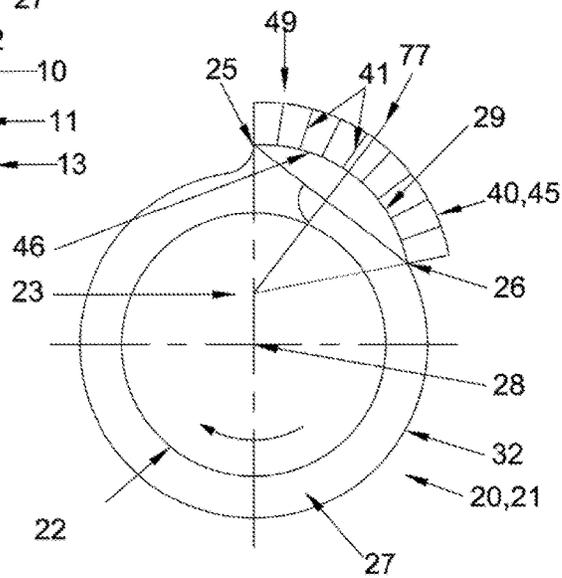


Fig. 3

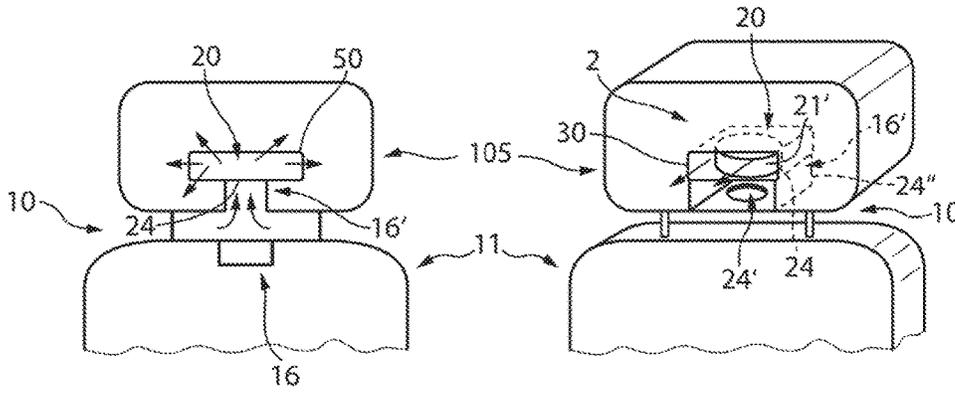


Fig. 4

Fig. 5

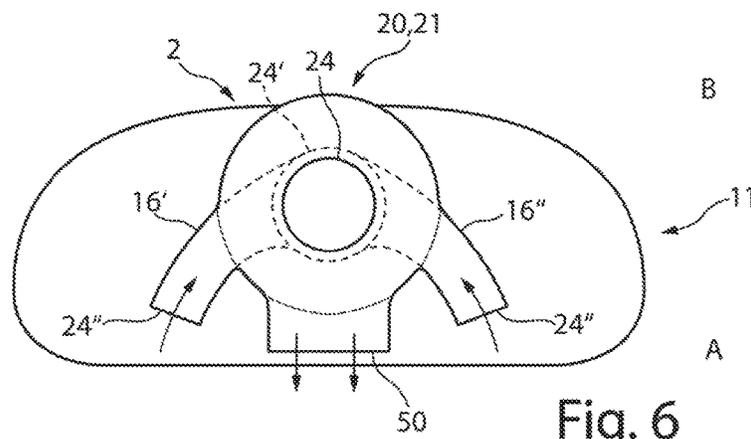


Fig. 6

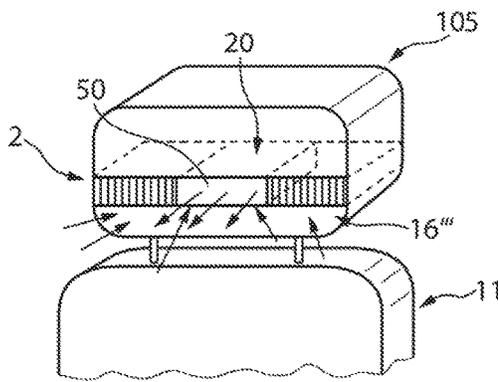


Fig. 7a

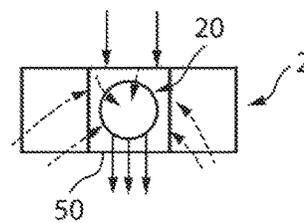


Fig. 7b

HEATER FAN, ESPECIALLY FOR USE AS A NECK WARMER IN VEHICLE SEATS

The present invention concerns a heater fan for a body support arrangement, wherein the heater fan has at least one air delivery arrangement and at least one heating appliance.

Heater fans of this kind are used, e.g., as neck warmers for air conditioning of vehicle seats and passenger compartments.

Known neck warmers are limited in their functionality or relatively expensive. Thus, there is a demand for economical systems with high efficiency, simple installation, and compact, weight-saving design.

SUBJECT MATTER OF THE INVENTION

Against this background, a technical concept is proposed with a heater fan for a body support arrangement, wherein the heater fan has at least one air delivery arrangement and at least one heating appliance. The present teachings provide for a neck warmer with a heater fan of the teachings herein, wherein the air delivery arrangement has a radial fan with at least one intake opening, which is directed toward an intermediate space between a seat back and a head rest.

The present teachings further provide for a set for a vehicle with at least one heater fan of the teachings herein and/or a neck warmer of the teachings herein. The present teachings provide for a vehicle including a heater fan, a neck warmer, a seat, or a combination thereof of the teachings herein. Further advantageous embodiments will be found in the other claims and the following specification.

FIGURES

In what follows, details of the invention will be discussed. These remarks should make the invention comprehensible. However, they are only in the way of an example. Of course, one or more features as described can also be omitted from, modified, or added to the invention. The features of different embodiments can also be combined with each other, of course. What is critical is that the concept of the invention is essentially implemented. When a feature is to be at least partly fulfilled, this includes the feature also being entirely or essentially entirely fulfilled. "Essentially" means here, in particular, that the implementing enables an achieving of the desired benefit to a recognizable degree. This can mean, in particular, that a corresponding feature is fulfilled by at least 50%, 90%, 95% or 99%.

Reference shall be made below to:

FIG. 1 motor vehicle in partial longitudinal section

FIG. 2 upper part of the seat of the motor vehicle of FIG. 1 with neck warmer in longitudinal section

FIG. 3 top view of a fan of a neck warmer of FIG. 1 with the housing partly removed

FIG. 4 front view of the upper region of the seat of FIG. 1 with a second embodiment of a neck warmer

FIG. 5 perspective view of the upper region of the seat of FIG. 1 with a third embodiment of a neck warmer

FIG. 6 view of a seat of FIG. 1 from above, not showing the head rest, with a fourth embodiment of a neck warmer

FIG. 7 a perspective view of the upper region of the seat of FIG. 1 with a fifth embodiment of a neck warmer

FIG. 7 b top view of the fan mechanism of the embodiment of FIG. 7 a

SPECIFICATION OF THE INVENTION

The present teachings claim priority to German Application No. DE102012014879.5 filed on Jul. 25, 2012 and

DE102012023909.2, filed on Dec. 7, 2012, both of which are incorporated by reference herein.

FIG. 1 shows a vehicle 1000 as one conceivable area of use of the invention. This can be, e.g., an airplane, a railway vehicle, a ship, or a motor vehicle as in the present case.

The vehicle has at least one body supporting arrangement 1. When in doubt, this means any structural parts that support a user of a passenger compartment, especially seats, seat banks, head rests, arm rests, and the like.

Such a body support arrangement 1 is preferably coordinated with at least one heater fan 2 in the form of a neck warmer 2'. The neck warmer 2' has one or more air delivery arrangements 20, in order to suction air from behind and/or underneath a body support arrangement 1 and eject it toward the user. A radial fan 21 is especially suitable for this.

The air delivery arrangement 20, as shown in FIG. 2, can be arranged beneath a head rest 105 or in a seat back 11. But it can also be arranged on the B-side of the cushion 13 facing away from the user, in order to achieve a good vibration attenuation. Depending on the application, it may also be expedient to integrate it in a cushion 13.

Preferably, the air delivery arrangement 20 has a housing 30, which surrounds an impeller 22 and a heating appliance 40. Preferably the housing 30 of the air delivery arrangement 20 is made at least partly of an elastic material, such as silicone, rubber, or the like. This dampens vibrations and prevents injuries from unintentional or careless rapid head movements of a user.

The air delivery arrangement 20 can have an intake opening 24. Preferably, however, the intake opening 24 of the air delivery arrangement 20 is free of struts, in order to minimize air resistance. Furthermore, the intake opening preferably lies on an axis of rotation 28 of an impeller 22 or has the axis passing through it. For it is advisable for the air to be drawn in parallel to or along the axis of rotation into the radial fan. In the case of a radial fan mounted underneath a head rest 105 with air in the direction of the user, the intake opening 24 is preferably oriented downward to the seat back 11 and an intermediate space 10. In this way, air is suctioned from the intermediate space 10 between seat back 11 and head rest 105.

Since head rests are usually adjustable, it can be advisable to limit the amount of lowering of the head rest 105 to the seat back 11, so as to ensure a minimum gap for the intermediate space 10 between the two components 11, 105.

In addition or alternatively, a supply duct 16 in the form of a channel-like recess at the upper edge of the seat back 11 can also be provided. Its position corresponds to the intake opening 24 of the air delivery arrangement 20. The recess 16 is preferably elongated, in order to ensure an air supply to the intake opening 24 even when the head rest 105 is lowered to its bottom position, and thus the intake opening 24 of the air delivery arrangement 20 is actually closed. Preferably, the recess 16 extends to the front side and/or the back side of the seat back 11. But this recess 16 can also be closed off in front toward the user, in order to force a supply of fresh air from the back side of the seat back 11. It can also alternatively be closed off in the back, to force a circulation of the air delivery. This increases the heating efficiency of the neck warmer 2'.

If an air delivery arrangement 20 is arranged additionally or alternatively on the upper edge of the seat back 11, its intake opening 24 will preferably be oriented toward the head rest 105 or upward. The described operating principles for a corresponding elongated recess in the head rest will remain the same.

The intake opening **24** is preferably flush with or concentric to the impeller and staggered on the axis of rotation of the impeller **22** of the radial fan.

The air delivery arrangement **20**, as shown in FIG. 3, has at least one impeller **22** in a worm-shaped working space **27**, which takes in air from an intake opening **24** in the housing, which deflects the air flow by preferably around 90° and then puts out the air flow through a heating appliance **40** and one or more blowing vents **50**.

In a typical radial fan or heater fan, air is ducted along a tangent from a fan and an outlet opening of the working space is perpendicular to this tangent to the impeller.

In the preferred air delivery arrangement **20** of the invention, this tangential bundling of the air stream is omitted. Instead, the housing **32** of the working space **27** of the impeller **22** is opened along a segment of a circumference so that air can emerge in the radial direction (with respect to the axis of rotation **28** of the impeller **22**) from the working **27**. Thus, the outflow opening **29** of the working space is at a position at least partly displaced inward as compared to conventional radial fans. The outflow opening **29** of the working space **27** is thus free of struts or the typical outflow strut is replaced by the heating appliance **40** and its housing. This provides a compact design with very slight flow and heat losses.

The air delivery arrangement **20** preferably has at least one heating appliance **40**, e.g., in the form of an ohmic resistance. The heating appliance **40** preferably has a plurality of heat input elements **41**. These heat input elements can be, for example:

- a plurality of individual sheetlike elements which transfer heat from a heat source to a fluid stream, e.g., heat conducting baffles as in FIG. 2,
- a section of zig zag bent strip that channels or generates heat,
- a plurality of heating circuits or a plurality of sections of a single heating circuit which generate heat directly,
- a plurality of vanes which convey and/or generate heat and at the same time guide the fluid stream,
- a register of heating coils,
- a PCT heating element with or without heat exchanger, and/or
- one or more Peltier elements.

These heat input elements **41** are preferably at least partly grouped into a register block. The register block or the heating appliances are at least in part not perpendicular but instead parallel or inclined to the direction of flow of the fluid stream impinging on them. Preferably, at least some of the heat input elements **41** deflect the fluid stream emerging from the impeller **22**.

Preferably, the register block or the heating appliance acts as a diffuser **45**, which broadens out the fluid stream flowing through it from an inlet width to a larger outlet width in funnel fashion, i.e., forming it out. The heat input elements **41** of the heating appliance **40** are preferably arranged in an arc along the outflow opening **29** of the working space **27**, so that the outer edge **49** of the heating appliance **40** corresponds to the width of the blowing vent **50** of the air delivery arrangement **20** or that of a diaphragm **55** of the neck warmer **2'**. That is, the edge **49** of the heating appliance has at least roughly the same length as the blowing vent of the air delivery arrangement **20** or the air emerging from a smaller heating appliance **40** distributed without further significant deflection across the full width of a larger blowing vent **50** of the air delivery arrangement **20**. It can also be

provided that the edge **49** of the heating appliance is identical to the blowing vent **50** of the air delivery arrangement **20**.

Preferably, the aforementioned arc for the arrangement of the heat conducting elements corresponds to a circle segment **46**. The corresponding circle preferably encompasses both edges of the outflow opening **29** of the working space **27**. The center point **23** of this circle preferably lies on the straight line connecting the front edge **25** of the outflow opening of the working space in the flow direction and the axis of rotation **28** of the impeller. Furthermore, the center point **23** preferably lies on a perpendicular **77** at the center point of the line connecting the two edges **25**, **28** of the outflow opening **29** of the working space **27**. This arrangement has the effect that the air flowing through it ensures an optimal heat exchange, and the outflowing air is distributed optimally over the cross section or the outflow opening of the air delivery arrangement on a head rest.

The housing **30** of the air delivery arrangement **20** has at least one blowing vent **50**, which in regard to the axis of rotation **28** of the impeller **22** lies at least in part at the same height as this impeller **22**. Preferably the arrangement is such that the air stream ejected by the impeller **22** can pass through without having to change its direction of flow, at least without a change in the lengthwise direction of the axis of rotation.

Preferably, at least one blowing vent **50** is covered by a diaphragm **55**, e.g., by a lattice with swiveling blades. This prevents a contact between heating appliance **40** and impeller **22**, on the one hand, and user on the other. Furthermore, the air can be directed as the user desires and adjusted to their body height.

In the design specified here, the radial fan is thus arranged so that its natural intake and its natural outflow is congruent to the desired operation of the neck warmer and so no deflection of the air is needed. This enables an optimal utilization of the energy input for operation. If its blades are curved backward in terms of its direction of rotation, the fan operates more quietly and with less vibration.

A heater fan **2** according to the invention, especially in an embodiment according to FIG. 3, can also be used for alternative applications and be arranged lower down in the seat e.g., to warm the lower back. A use on vehicle doors, in the foot area, or on a dashboard, or also on beds, garden furniture and the like, is also conceivable.

FIGS. 4 to 7 b show variants of this concept. They make use of the same principles. Therefore, only the differences shall be mentioned below. In particular, however, they can all be configured as described in regard to the heating element.

The embodiment according to FIG. 4 shows that in addition to or alternatively to the supply duct **16** in the seat back **11** there can also be provided a supply duct **16'** in the head rest **105**. This preferably runs as a recess along the underside of the head rest **105** and beneath the air delivery arrangement **20**. The principles described for the supply duct **16** apply to its arrangement, orientation and shape.

According to FIG. 5 the air delivery arrangement **20** and the supply duct **16'** can also be designed as a common structural part, e.g., a plastic molded part with two parallel shafts having a rectangular cross section. The air delivery arrangement **20** here is situated on an upper level, in which the impeller of the air delivery arrangement **20** expels the air forward through a heating, element toward the neck of the user.

The downward directed intake opening **24** of the fan **21'** is connected to the supply duct **16'** and is replenished with

air from it. If the head rest 105 is at a distance from the seat back, the supply duct 16' will be supplied with air via the now opened air vent opening 24'. The air vent opening 24' is arranged preferably flush with the intake opening 24 of the fan 21', preferably concentric to the axis of rotation of the impeller of the fan 21'. Its area is preferably larger than the area of the intake opening 24 of the fan 21'. In addition, at least one second air vent opening 24" is provided in the supply duct 16', which also ensures the replenishment of air when the head rest 105 is retracted fully onto the seat back. This second air vent opening 24" is preferably arranged on the back side of the head rest 105 away from the user and is subjected to eddy currents from the driving wind, for example. Alternatively or in addition to the second air vent opening 24", an air vent opening can also be provided on the front side of the head rest 105 facing the user. This then lies at the end face of the supply duct 16' beneath the blowing vent 50.

The embodiment of FIG. 6 largely corresponds to that of FIG. 5. Here as well a fan 21' is provided with a downwardly directed intake opening 24, which draws air from a supply duct 16' situated on a lower level. The supply duct 16' also has a first air vent opening 24' similarly to FIG. 5. The supply duct 16", however, does not run from front to rear perpendicular to the surface of the seat back. Instead, it is U-shaped, its middle piece being connected to the fan 21'. Its legs are curved forward toward the user and draw in air at two air vent openings 24" symmetrically on right and left at the side of the user and the blowing vent 50, which is then taken to the fan. In this way, one gets a circulation of the heated air that is blown out, which improves the energy efficiency of the system. Preferably, the air vent openings 24" are situated in a region in which an increased back pressure would arise without the air vent openings 24" at adjoining areas of the seat back or the head rest.

The circulation effect can be further intensified if the supply duct 16" is provided with one or more air vent openings 24" essentially over the entire width of the seat back as in FIGS. 7 a and b, which together cover at least half the width of the seat back, preferably essentially the entire width of the seat back. It may also be expedient for this if the supply duct 16' and its air vent openings 24" form essentially a lowermost level of a head rest. Preferably, in addition, the areas next to the blowing vent 50 are further designed as an air vent opening 24". To further improve the air supply, in addition or alternatively air vent openings can also be provided in the rear toward the back side of the seat.

Preferably the air delivery arrangement 20 with the supply duct are jointly configured as a modular component. It can be provided on its visible areas with an upholstery that preferably matches that of the seat back or the head rest.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- 1 body support arrangement
- 2 heater fan
- 2' neck warmer
- 10 intermediate spade
- 11 seat back
- 13 cushion
- 16 supply duct as recess in the seat back
- 16' supply duct as recess in the head rest
- 16" supply duct as air duct in the head rest
- 20 air delivery arrangement
- 21 radial fan
- 21' fan
- 22 impeller

- 23 center point of the circle
- 24 intake opening
- 24' first air vent opening
- 24" second air vent opening
- 25, 26 edge of outflow opening
- 27 working space
- 28 axis of rotation
- 29 outflow opening
- 30 housing of the air delivery arrangement
- 32 housing of the working space
- 40 heating appliance
- 41 heat input elements
- 45 diffuser
- 46 circle segment
- 49 edge of the heating appliance
- 50 blowing vent
- 55 diaphragm
- 77 perpendicular
- 105 head rest
- 1000 vehicle

The invention claimed is:

1. A body supporting arrangement comprising:

- a. a seat back;
- b. a head rest; and
- c. an air delivery arrangement comprising:
 - a fan that is configured to suction air from an intermediate space defined between an upper edge of the seat back and a lower edge of the head rest, the air is suctioned upwardly in a direction from an area adjacent the upper edge of the seat back to an area adjacent the lower edge of the head rest, the fan is configured to then eject the suctioned air towards a user;

wherein the upper edge of the seat back includes a recess so that the fan can suction the air from the intermediate space even when the head rest is lowered against the upper edge of the seat back.

2. The body supporting arrangement of claim 1, wherein the fan comprises an impeller located in a working space of a housing that comprises an outflow opening, and wherein the air delivery arrangement comprises a heating appliance comprising a plurality of heat input elements arranged in an arc along the outflow opening.

3. The body supporting arrangement of claim 2, wherein the heat input elements can be one or more:

- a. heat conducting baffles;
- b. zig zag bent strips that channel or generate heat;
- c. heating circuits that generate heat directly;
- d. register of heating coils;
- e. PCT elements with or without a heat exchanger;
- f. Peltier elements.

4. The body supporting arrangement of claim 1, wherein the recess extends to a front side and a back side of the seat back.

5. The body supporting arrangement of claim 1, wherein either: a. the recess extends to a front side of the seat back and is closed off at a back side of the seat back so that the fan suctions the air from the front side of the seat back; or b. the recess extends to a back side of the seat back and is closed off at a front side of the seat back so that the fan suctions the air from the back side of the seat back.

6. The body supporting arrangement of claim 1, wherein the body supporting arrangement is a seat for a vehicle.

7. The body supporting arrangement of claim 1, wherein the air delivery arrangement comprises a heating appliance

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comprising a plurality of heat input elements that are configured to transfer heat to the air that is ejected towards the user, and

wherein the heating appliance operates as a diffuser that broadens out a stream of the air that is ejected towards the user.

8. A neck warmer comprising:

- a. a fan that is configured to suction air and then eject the suctioned air towards a neck of a user; and
- b. a heating appliance that is configured to transfer heat to the suctioned air that is ejected towards the neck of the user,

wherein the heating appliance is also a diffuser that is configured to deflect a stream of the air that is ejected towards the neck of the user,

wherein a vehicle seat comprises the neck warmer, the vehicle seat comprises a seat back and a head rest,

wherein the fan suctions the air from an intermediate space defined between the seat back and the head rest, the air is suctioned from an area adjacent the upper edge of the seat back to an area adjacent a lower edge of the head rest, and

wherein the fan is located in the head rest, and the seat back has an upper edge that includes a recess so that the fan can suction the air from the recess when the head rest is lowered against the upper edge of the seat back.

9. The neck warmer of claim 8, wherein the heating appliance is a plurality of heat input elements that are arranged in an arc along an outflow opening of a housing containing an impeller of the fan.

10. The neck warmer of claim 9, wherein the heat input elements are arranged parallel to a direction of the stream of the air.

11. The neck warmer of claim 10, wherein the fan suctions the air into the housing which is then deflected about 90 degrees in the housing, and then ejected through the heating appliance and one or more blowing vents towards the neck of the user.

12. The neck warmer of claim 9, wherein the heat input elements can be one or more:

- a. heat conducting baffles;
- b. zig zag bent strips that channel or generate heat;
- c. heating circuits that generate heat directly;
- d. register of heating coils;
- e. PCT elements with or without a heat exchanger,
- f. Peltier elements.

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13. A vehicle seat comprising:

- a. a seat back;
- b. a head rest;
- c. an intermediate space located between an upper edge of the seat back and a lower edge of the head rest; and
- d. a neck warmer comprising:

- i. a fan that suctions air from the intermediate space and ejects the air towards a neck of a user, the fan comprising an impeller that is located in a working space of a housing, the working space comprises an outflow opening, and
- ii. a heating appliance that transfers heat to the air that is ejected towards the neck of the user,

wherein the heating appliance is also a diffuser that deflects and broadens out a stream of the air that is ejected towards the neck of the user,

wherein the heating appliance comprises a plurality of heat input elements are arranged in an arc along the outflow opening, and

wherein the upper edge of the seat back includes a recess so that the fan can suction the air from the intermediate space when the lower edge of the head rest is against the upper edge of the seat back.

14. The vehicle seat of claim 13, wherein the heat input elements can be one or more:

- a. heat conducting baffles;
- b. zig zag bent strips that channel or generate heat;
- c. heating circuits that generate heat directly;
- d. register of heating coils;
- e. PCT elements with or without a heat exchanger,
- f. Peltier elements.

15. The vehicle seat of claim 13, wherein the recess extends to a front side and a back side of the seat back.

16. The vehicle seat of claim 13, wherein the recess extends to a front side of the seat back and is closed off at a back side of the seat back so that the fan suctions the air from the front side of the seat back.

17. The vehicle seat of claim 13, wherein the recess extends to a back side of the seat back and is closed off at a front side of the seat back so that the fan suctions the air from the back side of the seat back.

18. The vehicle seat of claim 13, wherein the fan is configured to suction the air upwardly in a direction from an area adjacent the upper edge of the seat back towards an area adjacent the lower edge of the head rest.

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